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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to learn about some of the substantive differences between Head Start and day care programs by identifying Head Start programs that had initiated day care services and then comparing similarities and differences before and after transition. The research strategy involved two phases: (1) identifying the national trend in all Head Start programs that had converted from part day operation to full day operation in 1969, 1970 and 1971, (2) selecting a representative sample of programs that had made the conversion. In the entire sample, only 19 had converted to day care, 10 of which were selected for intensive study. Findings are presented under the following headings: (1) Interview Data, (2) Decision Making Which Led to Conversion, (3) Changes in Program Objectives, (4) Specific Problem Areas Identified in Interviews as a Result of Change in Operating Characteristics, (5) The Working Mother, and (6) Facilities. (Author/MS)

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Are Head Start and Day Care National Alternatives?

A Study of Head Start Programs that Converted to Day Care

Alfred L. Karlson

In the past decade the American people saw an attempt by the federal government to end poverty through direct intervention which President Johnson called the war on poverty. A new governmental agency, the office of Economic Opportunity was created which then implemented new services from federal monies in community, health, legal, and educational services. One program from this effort created a national trend in this country which dominated and continues to dominate thinking about special educational needs of the poor. This program, Operation Head Start, led many educators to characterize the 1960's as the decade of compensatory preschool education for the disadvantaged child. The objectives, methods, and evaluation of the many diverse compensatory preschool programs have been the subject of intensive research and planning efforts by educators and psychologists in universities and by those working in the federal government. The general effectiveness of the strategy is currently being debated: there are those who acclaimed it as extremely successful and those critics who have argued against excessive optimism. It is clear, however, that there is general agreement on the major objectives of operation Head Start: the idea was simply to give the economically disadvantaged child preschool experience which would better prepare him to use his following school experience more effectively. While many programs stressed a wide range of other services, the benefits that may have accrued to the participating child's family were seen as indirect. The original educational rationale was apparent in the name of the program: Head Start and the rationale was not a complex one: if poverty children fall behind in

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school achievement beginning in grade school, then let them begin earlier to compensate for this trend in poor achievement. In other words, the focus was clearly on the three and four year old child who was likely to do poorly in school achievement.

Recently, there has been increasing emphasis on day care programs as services to the poor, and in terms of the national picture, it has been argued that day care services should replace Head Start programs. The rationale for this point is that day care programs will meet the compensatory educational needs of the disadvantaged child and allow for the mother of the child to work and thereby better the families economic situation.

The purpose of this study was to learn about some of the substantive differences between Head Start and day care programs by identifying Head Start programs that had initiated day care services and then compare the similarities and differences before and after the transitions.

The initial research questions which guided the thinking in designing and executing the following stemmed directly from our concern for more clearly understanding three issues: (1) we were interested in knowing the extent to which current national Head Start programs are operating on a full day basis, and therefore providing essentially a day care service, (2) we were interested in describing what we expected to be a national trend in the conversion of Head Start programs from part day operations to full day operations in the 1969, 70 and 71, and (3) we were interested in the nature of the conversion process from operating part day Head Start programs into operating full day programs. More specifically we wanted to understand how the process of conversion was initiated and how it was implemented. Specific issues here seemed clearly important. They were: evidence of community

need for full day programs, a comparative cost analysis of the two kinds of programs, the differences in objectives of the two kinds of programs, the comparative success of the different programs, the comparative problems both in the transitions from part day to full day programming, and in the actual operating differences.

The research strategy developed to attempt to seek solutions to these questions is basically a simple one. It involved two phases. The first was to identify the national trend in all Head Start programs that had converted from part day operation to full day operation in 1969, 70, and 71 fiscal years. Phase two involved selecting a representative small sample of programs that had made such a conversion for more intensive study through site visits and interviews.

It was postulated, that Head Start centers initiating day-long programs were common, and that in these past fiscal years, we would see a national trend toward day-long programming in response to an existing need for day care or substitute day care facilities for children of the economically disadvantaged.

Records from the Washington Office of Child Development which sponsors and funds Head Start Centers were obtained for fiscal years 1969, 1970, and 1971. The information included the following: the names and locations of all operating Head Start grantees, the length of day of their programs, the amount of federal and non-federal funds they received, the number of site or operating locations, number of classes and children each grantee served, and the number of professional, resident (community), and volunteers staff operating in the center.

In examining these data, a reversal of the expected trend was found: it found that part day programs increased slightly and that more programs converted from full day to part day than did programs convert from part day to full day.

In 1969, the percentage of Head Start programs operating on a full day basis was 41.9 while those operating on a part time basis was 58.1. In fiscal year 1970, the numbers of part time accounts increase slightly, while the percentage of full time accounts decrease slightly. By fiscal year 1971, 64.7 percent of all accounts were part time, while 35.3 percent were full time. These data are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

While no information was obtained before the 1969 fiscal year, it is clear that in the national trend of operating Head Start centers has not been toward programming on a full day basis.

In the entire sample, only 19 programs had, in fact, converted to day care from part day programming. These exceptions to the national trend were then singled out for further more intensive study. Of the nineteen programs identified, which are exceptions to the national trend, half converted to full day in fiscal year 1970, and half in 1971. The locations of these programs were geographically diverse, six were located in the Eastern section of the country, New England, New York State, New Jersey and Philadelphia. Nine were Southern including Mississippi, Virginia, Arkansas, West Virginia and Texas. Two are Midwestern, Minnesota and Ohio, and two are Western,

California and Washington State. Eleven of the programs might be classified rural-suburban, while the remaining eight could be classified urban. Two are located in large cities. The members of the sample pool vary in size and numbers of children served, the largest serving 1,000 at 60 locations after conversion, and the smallest four each serving 30 children in one location. Within this wide range, the programs serve an average of 178 children each. While expenditures per child between programs does not seem to vary radically after conversion from part day to full day operations, in general full day operations cost more to run. Each program that has made the conversion has either increased its funding level, or decreased the numbers of children it serves. Two programs reduced their overall costs after conversion by decreasing professional staff in one case and decreasing numbers of locations in the other. Four of the centers increased funding levels and decreased numbers of children served. In terms of total children served by these diverse programs, 4,600 children attended part day Head Start programs before conversion and 3,675 attended full day programs after conversion. In terms of expenditures, based on total budgeted monies divided by numbers of children, an average of $1,003 was spent per child per year before conversion, and $1,770.50 was spent per child per year after conversion.

Phase II of the study involved more intensive examination of the sample pool programs, qualitative information and more specific statistics from these programs through site visits.

The following interview schedule was used in conjunction with a site visit. Furthermore all budget and basic statistics were obtained for these 10 programs.

The design of Phase II included a preliminary check with all of the programs to assess the accuracy of the data on programs in their region. With the exception of the complications with the nature of the conversion identified in the largest Eastern urban center, all other findings from the sample pool were accurate. Ten perating full day Head Start centers which had converted from part day were chosen from the sample for site visits. Good geographic and urban-rural diversity was maintained.

The specific issues we were interested in were included in the following questionnaire or interview schedule.

Interview Schedule for the Study of Head Start Centers that have Initiated Day Long Programs

We are interested in talking with people who have recently expanded their Head Start programs into full day operations. This is because we expect that increased federal emphasis on Child Care will call for such expansion in the near future and we are interested in learning from programs, such as yours, about some aspects of the expansion process. It is our hope that information that you can provide us will prove useful to other programs considering expansion. The following questions are not meant to be evaluative but are rather to find out information.

Questions about the nature of the transition from part day programming to full day programming:

1. What would you consider to be the reasons behind the decision made at your center to operate on a full day basis? Of these possible reasons, which would you rate as most important and why?

2. In comparison to the part day operation, how do you think the program has changed in terms of its objectives? What do you see as the most important change in objectives and why?

3. In terms of just "running" the program, what strikes you as being different now that you operate full time? What has been the easiest and most difficult in terms of adjusting or changing your program.

4. We are interested in the decision making process that you underwent to make the change from part day to full day. For example, who seemed to have the idea first and who worked hardest to see that it was accomplished?

5. In your experiences do you have a way of telling whether or not the families you serve are satisfied with the new program? Does it, for example, allow more mothers to work? What do you see are the overall advantages and disadvantages of the full day versus part day program?

It was expected that the author would use this set of questions to collect data from the directors or other knowledgeable people through site visits to the sample programs. Included in this interview schedule were requests for basic data statistics and basic cost information. This request for information went beyond what was already known about each center from the Phase I data collection which was done in the Washington central office. More specifically, we now asked about the type of building they utilized, the general economic status of the parents they served, the numbers of mothers who worked and needed the facility for a day care service. This information was to be obtained on a before and after comparison basis. Data collection spanned three months time and involved the researcher's visit to three regional offices, one in the South, one in the Midwest, and one in the Far West. Specific visits were also made to three rural Southern centers and three urban Eastern centers.

Additional information was obtained from the Midwest regional administrative office on three centers, two included in the sample pool, and a urban center in a large Northern Midwest city which had operated full time in fiscal year 1969, part time in fiscal year 1970, and full time again in fiscal year 1971. Data was also obtained on two centers in the Far West

which could be characterized as suburban-rural. In total, six centers were site visited while data on four centers was obtained from supervisors of programs from regional offices. All data collection was done by the author.

Findings of Phase II, An Intensive View of 10 Programs

The interview data. The best interview data is limited to the six programs which were site visited by the author. These programs were located in a poor urban town in Massachusetts, a large Eastern city, and small rural communities in West Virginia, Arkansas, and Texas. Comparable data on the programs in rural Ohio, urban, Minnesota and suburban California were obtained from personnel and records in the regional offices. This information was seen by the author as being somewhat less helpful because of the distance from the source, and was used less extensively in reporting findings.

The decision making which lead to conversion. Of all the directors and assistants interviewed none of the respondents saw the conversion as a response to an expressed need in the community. One agency director felt that the urban day care center that was converted from Head Start funds in his community was the result of the government selling them a "bill of goods." In contrast to this, the development of a rural day care program from Head Start funds was seen by one director as a community need once the community had been systematically educated by her agency to appreciate this need and to participate in the actual implementation of the program.

In two cases, the major reason for the conversion given was directive from the regional office seemingly contingent on future funding. In the first instance, the responses indicated that the agency felt it was a coming

thing and wished to be "with it" combined with the fact that a state study of the town poverty area had recommended day care services for the community. When asked if the need was expressed by the community, the answer was no, that the community was not organized in a way that it could express this need. In summary, the major conclusion must be drawn that directors and others felt that the decision to convert came from opinions of experts and professionals and often from a perceived or direct order from those who controlled their funding. The decision making process behind converting from Head Start operations to day care was, of course, closely linked to the program's survival. This seems particularly to be the case of the day care program operating in the largest urban setting which is now operated by the Board of Education under contract by the State Department of Public Welfare, but was previously run by the school board as delegated agency of an Anti Poverty Action Committee which was funded by O.E.O. As the result of a funding crises through O.E.O. the day care operation was forced to begin full day operations so that the State would assure their operating funds. At this point the Anti Poverty Community Action agenc began its own part day program and ceased to deal with the day care program. Conversion in this case, which involved the operation of 104 locations, was clearly the result of a survival tactic on the part of the program's board of directors. This process could be best characterized as an acrimonious battle between the proponents of day care versus the proponents of Head Start, but it remains unclear as to who was responsible for the initial budgetary crises.

In conclusion, the interview data from the six directors suggests that the basic reasons behind the shift from part day to full day (day care) Head

Start programming came from internal or perceived governmental pressures, or as the result of professional recommendations. I would suggest that this does not necessarily have negative connotations in the actual implementations of the programs or in meeting the needs of poverty communities. This seems particularly important in terms of the rural day care programs in West Virginia, which, under the charismatic leadership of a few individuals, has involved many parents as paraprofessionals and seems to have generated solid community support.

Changes in Program Objectives. Those interviewed frequently saw the possibility of utilizing the expended time in the full day (day care) situation to have a greater impact on the lives of the children and their families. It was recognized, however, that the extra hours spent with children required changes in program objectives. It was reported that the old Head Start part day educational objectives could successfully be incorporated into the day long program if staffing permitted; however, the following change in program objective was mentioned several times: in the day long program more attention must be paid to the affective needs of children because the length of day fosters closer worker-child relationships. In line with this, the smallest program, in rural Texas felt that while they did incorporate Head Start type activities, music, art, educational T.V. and others, the new strength of the program was in the home like atmosphere they provided for the children which included expanded food and health services. It seemed also clear to the researcher that all directors were careful to state that they were not providing merely custodial or babysitting care for the children, but that they somehow were attempting to serve a surrogate parental function to somehow provide assistance

to the families they serve, but the previous Head Start programs were characterized as being more school oriented that their current programs. Some directors said that they would prefer operating a part day program just in terms of the additional work involved for them, but felt that in the long run the full day, day care model was better, basically because it provided more and lengthy contact between children and workers and professional staff.

Specific Problem Areas Identified in Interviews as a Result of Changes in Operating Characteristics

(1) It was found that new day long programs often served a younger child or a larger age range of children if the program took siblings on an after school basis. This was seen as problematic because it required new programming efforts.

(2) If the program operated on a 7AM to 6PM basis a split shift staffing arrangement usually was used. Under these conditions, continuity of adult child contact was disrupted.

(3) Parent involvement on a volunteer basis was more difficult to arrange if the mother worked. Under these conditions parent auxilliary groups were often the only parent involvement unless the mother's job was actually in the day care center.

(4) Because more meals were served, meal preparation was more costly.

(5) State requirements of licensing operations as day care services are more rigorous than for Head Start programs and as a result many programs had difficulty meeting minimum staffing, space, and food requirements.

(6) If services for siblings were not available, siblings would often take children from the program home with them after school. This problem was

limited to the urban programs.

(7) Because priorities for serving working mothers existed for most programs, a recruitment problem existed given that so few mothers worked in high poverty areas.

It is interesting to note that none of the directors or other administrative assistants felt that there were no "easy" aspects to the conversion. Three felt that the term conversion was inaccurate, and that they had really begun from scratch or that in some ways the process of implementing their programs would have been simpler if they had done so. Most directors felt relatively positive about their professional and paraprofessional staff. It was this researcher's impression that the rural programs had done a particularly outstanding job in the training of community poverty individuals as paraprofessionals. A recurrent theme, however, was the issue of summer jobs for local elementary school teachers who had depended on summer Head Start sessions for employment. These teachers were perceived by those interviewed as being resistant to implementing day long full year programs due to the cut in their financial resources.

In the rural communities, the directors felt that they were currently providing better and more consistent dental and medical health care for participating children than had previously been provided by part day and summer programs. This was because they felt they could identify health problems more readily through more contact with children and families and exercise more control over following through with these services. In addition, the directors felt that they offered nutritional supplements to home diets in their more extensive breakfast, snack and lunch services. These food services also pro-

vided employment opportunities for poverty community individuals.

The Working Mother

Only one program which served 30 children had a requirement that the mother worked or was handicapped. In this rural program, 28 mothers had jobs. In the smaller Eastern urban area, of 300 families served, an estimated 5% of the mothers worked. In the larger day care program, which serves 5,000 children, as estimated 35% of the mothers worked. In rural Arkansas, the program serves 145 children, and reported that no mother worked. In West Virginia the program served 210 children with an estimated 60% of working mothers. Administrators in the CAP agencies which sponsor these programs felt that unemployment was high for their areas. To some extent, civilian labor force unemployment data for standard metropolitan areas support their contentions, particularly for the larger area where unemployment among Negroes is particularly high.

It seems clear that the strategy of making available services for working mothers is questionable unless jobs are available.

A consistent question asked the individuals interviewed after the initial question on numbers of mothers who needed the facility to work, was: in your estimation are there jobs available for them in the area? It was consistently perceived by all directors that jobs were scarce in every area. The issue of providing a service for working mothers who had little chance of getting jobs did not seem to be a major inconsistency to the directors except in the case of one director who was against the day care model in general. Particularly he felt that the jobs given working mothers in work incentive plan created a false need for day care and undignified work for mothers.

Facilities

Finally, additional data was collected on kinds of physical plants that were used as day care centers. Most frequently the facilities were unused church space and unused school buildings. The directors maintained that the centers kept to guidelines of 35 square feet of window space and 75 square feet of outdoor space per child, but frequently complained that they were forced to use basement facilities, run down or abandoned school facilities, and general unwanted space. The fact that meeting licensing requirements became a recurrent problem for most operations reflects the realities of poor physical plants.

To summarize the Phase II data then: It was found that after conversion to full day, the programs were more expensive to run. When the programs ran on a part day basis an average expenditure of $1,003 per child per year was reported while full day programs spent an average of $1,770 per child per year. After conversion from part day to full day, the programs served less children unless they were able to increase their outside funding sources. In terms of total children for the 19 programs, 4,600 children attended part day before conversion and 3,679 attended full day programs after conversion.

The full day programs did not necessarily allow more mothers to work; in fact recruitment of eligible working mothers for full day programs was seen as a problem for many programs, particularly in areas of high unemployment.

It was reported that changing form full day programming required a change in educational or program objectives in most cases. A common argument was given that day long programming required paying more attention to the children's affective needs. This was accompanied by the felt need for assuming a larger

parental surrogate role by the professionals operating the programs. Other changes in operating characteristics were also explored.

No evidence was apparent that the conversion from part day Head Start to full day child care programming was a function of expressed community need; rather the decision to convert was made by professionals in agencies because they saw advantages to day care versus Head Start programs, or because of a response to administrative pressures by those who controlled funding.

Conclusions from this small study on Head Start programs that initiated day care services for national policy are not readily obvious or particularly in favor of initiating day care services in lieu of Head Start programs. It would be difficult to argue, however, that facilities which gave full day care services to children which incorporated educational objectives of Head Start programs and allowed the mother to work would not be an ideal goal, but in reviewing the findings of programs which have, in fact, attempted this strategy, under present conditions the results have been less than ideal.

Table 1

Percentage of Programs Operating Full Day Versus

Part Day in Fiscal Year 1969, 70 and 71

Year	Numbers of Full Time Centers	Numbers of Part Time Centers	Total Numbers	Percentage Full Time	Percentage Part Time
1969	304	422	726	41.9	58.1
1970	349	588	937	37.2	62.8
1971	311	570	881	35.3	64.7